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Hilsman Resigns In U. S. Dispute On Viet Policy

From the Herald Tribune Bureau

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WASHINGTON.

The Johnson administration last night suddenly announced the resignation of one of its top policymakers for South Viet Nam, Assistant Secretary of State Roger Hilsman.

A White House announcement said that Mr. Hilsman has resigned to return to academic life. Mr. Hilsman, 44, said his leaving "was not related to any policy issues."

There have been differences apparent within the Administration how to win the war in South Viet Nam.

Earlier yesterday, both Red China and the Soviet Union responded separately but strongly to recent U. S. hints that the war might be carried into Communist North Viet Nam.

The Soviet government, in a statement circulated by Tass, demanded the withdrawal of American forces from South Viet Nam, and warned that Russia "cannot remain indifferent."

Red China's response was made by Premier Chou En-lai, who said that the U. S. must withdraw its troops from South Viet Nam and "stop its intervention in Laos" to insure peace in Southeast Asia. He was speaking in Dacca, East Pakistan, where he is on a state visit.

In South Viet Nam, where there had been a lull in the fighting since the lunar New Year holiday last week, government forces launched a large operation in the Cambodian border area. Heavy initial contact with the Communist Viet Cong was reported. Late Monday, Communist guerrillas blew up a railroad track northeast of Saigon, derailing six cars of a train and killing 11 people, it was announced yesterday.

Last Friday in a speech in Los Angeles President Johnson, in what was interpreted as a warning against North Viet Nam and Red China, said that "those engaged in external direction and supply would do well to be reminded and to remember that this type of aggression is a deeply dangerous game."

Since then, the White House has been anxious to play down any impression that the U. S. was contemplating immediate offensive action against North Viet Nam. Informed sources say that the U. S. is not ready at this time to extend the conflict by such means as large-scale guerrilla raids into North Viet Nam or an air-sea blockade to cut Viet Cong supply lines. All such reports, these sources say, are coming from Saigon, not Washington.

Soviet and Chinese Communist calls for the United States to pull out of Southeast Asia were ignored officially by Washington yesterday. Such demands, Washington said, have been broadcast repeatedly in the past. At the same time, the White House insisted again that Defense Secretary Robert McNamara's trip to Saigon, slated for the next 10 days or so, did not signify an expansion of the war into Communist North Viet Nam.

The Soviet statement reflects a Russian dilemma. The Soviets are reported to have recently refused to give North Viet Nam more military aid, and since then the North Viet Nam press has been denouncing "revisionists"—the Red Chinese label for Premier Khrushchev's brand of communism.

But even before the Soviet rejection of the aid, it had become clear that Moscow no longer decided Communist policy in Southeast Asia. Peking had very clearly taken over that role.

While there is little love

lost between Moscow and Hanoi, when President Johnson hinted at pushing the war into Communist territory, Russia apparently felt compelled to appear ready to do anything to keep this from happening.

Failure on the part of Mr. Khrushchev to speak out would have resulted in serious setback for Russia in the Moscow-Peking ideological battle for control of the Communist world. It would almost certainly have been interpreted as an admission that Southeast Asia was exclusively a Red Chinese sphere of influence.

Meanwhile, from Saigon, The Associated Press reported that the U. S. Embassy is canvassing American officials in South Viet Nam for ideas on how to press the war against Viet Cong. Americans attached to the U. S. aid mission and other departments have been sent a circular asking for fresh ideas on improving tactics and techniques, improving operating methods and organization, and new ways to harass the Viet Cong.

Meanwhile, Gen. Wallace M. Greene, new Marine Corps Commandant, said yesterday in Washington that he is optimistic that the Viet Cong can be defeated. Gen. Greene, who made an inspection tour in South Viet Nam before the Jan. 29 coup, outlined his views in an interview with the AP. He attributed the recently enlarged and increased Viet Cong attacks to a belief by the Communists that the war is going "in their favor." He also said that the guerrillas "are getting new weapons."